



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

161st Regular Session of Synod

November 17 – 19, 2022

CONVENING CIRCULAR

SECTION F

PILOT GOVERNANCE PROJECT

Memorandum

To: Synod Council
From: Joy Packham and Robert Hart
Date: September 22, 2022
Re: Governance Review – New Synod Council Structure

Introduction

We were approached in mid May 2022 by senior Diocesan staff, and asked to look at the perceptions of effectiveness of the changes made to a Governance Policy, that took place at Synod 2021 (Synod Council's Decision-Making Authority and Delegation of Authority Policy). Through electronically distributed surveys and in-person interviews we hoped to obtain feedback that would give us a sense of how people were finding the new model and if they felt the changes resulted in a more effective and efficient process for those doing business with Synod Council.

Methodology

Since the beginning of June 2022, we have met 12 times via Zoom to discuss how best to obtain the data which would demonstrate people's early perceptions. During that time, we were also interviewed by Stuart Mann of The Anglican; we also had an engaging conversation with Peter Elliott and Ian Alexander who are working on the 'Cast the Net' project. After several meetings we concluded that there were 3 distinct groups within the Diocese whose early impressions we wanted to hear:

1. Members of Synod Council
2. Chairs of Committees and through them, their members
3. Any groups who have done business with Synod Council or any of its committees

We developed 3 questionnaires which were shared electronically; we also offered the opportunity to engage in person or by Zoom – one person chose this option. Samples of each questionnaire follow.

A. Questionnaire for Synod Council

Name: _____

Committee: _____

1. How did you become a member of Synod Council? (Elected, volunteered, approached)
2. Is the mandate/role of Synod Council clear? Is the size/composition of Synod Council appropriate for its work?
3. How have you found the new Synod Council structure? Did you have previous experience with the former structure?
 - Does it save time?
 - Is it more efficient?
 - Can you identify roadblocks in the new structure that impede its success?
4. Do you believe that others in the Diocese understand the new structure of Synod Council? -What should be done to inform members of the Diocese of the new structure?
5. Is the structure of Synod Council fair and equitable to all in the Diocese?
6. Suggestions to improve the structure? Is there additional tweaking that should be done?

B. Questionnaire for Synod Council Committee Chairs

Name: _____

Committee: _____

1. How did you become a member of this committee? (Elected, volunteered, approached)
2. Is the mandate/role of your committee clear? Is the size/composition of your committee appropriate for its work?
3. Do you have any comments regarding the efficiency of Synod Council or how your committee work intersects with Synod Council?
4. Do you believe that others in the Diocese understand the new structure of Synod Council? What should be done to inform members of the Diocese of the new structure?
5. Is the makeup of your committee fair and equitable to all in the Diocese?
6. Suggestions to improve the structure?
-Is there additional tweaking that should be done?

C. Questionnaire for Parishes or other groups who have brought an issue before Synod Council or one of its subcommittees:

Name: _____

Parish: _____

1. Have you previously had occasion to come before Synod Council to make a presentation?

Yes _____ No _____
2. If you answered yes, how did your most recent interaction with Council or its Subcommittee compare to previous interactions? (Was it more efficient? Is the new structure more effective?)
3. How long did you wait from the time you submitted your request to Synod Council until the time you received a final decision? Was this an appropriate time period?
4. How effective/efficient is the new model of governance in your opinion based on your most recent interaction with Council or its Subcommittee?
5. Do you feel the new model of governance is transparent and fair? Please explain.
6. Did the composition of the committee you met with represent the diverse nature of our Diocese?
7. Do you have suggestions about ways to effectively communicate the changes to the structure of Synod Council and/or its decisions to parishes? How important is this?
8. Do you have suggestions for changes that would streamline or improve the current model of governance?

Review of Responses and Key Findings

Eighteen surveys were sent out and 15 responses received; we are very encouraged by this response rate and think our findings accurately reflect the current opinion. Because our data set is small, we are not reporting percentages, so as not to give inappropriate weight to any one finding.

One person requested an interview; we did this by Zoom - it was very worthwhile. Two people replied but did not complete the survey as they did not think they had enough relevant experience to provide a meaningful answer. There was only one non-response.

Most answers were brief and to the point. Not everyone answered all questions; some comments are standalone reflections. These are included at the end of the response summary.

In conclusion, the majority of responses were positive and showed support for the new Synod Council structure, which is considered timely and efficient, fair and transparent, and representative of the overall Diocese. A few responses indicated it is too soon to tell – our further work will honour this comment with continued review.

Total responses (combined, all 3 surveys)	15
Committees/Positions Responding	
• Human Resources	2
• Steering Committee	2
• Synod Council	8
• Parish	4
Questions	
1. How did you become a member	
• Approached and then elected	1
• Elected	10
• N/A	4
2. Clear Mandate? Is size/composition of committee appropriate	
• Yes	7
• No – too large	1
• Too soon to tell - a full year is needed; some sub-committees are not yet ready	3
• N/A	4
3. Comments re efficiency of Synod Council interaction	
• works well	6
• timely	11
• no difference	2
Roadblocks?	
• Unsure of how committees are monitored	1

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| 4. Do others know about this new structure? What could be done to better inform? | |
| • Many are unquestioning; would only be concerned if there were negatives | 4 |
| • Communication could be improved | 2 |
| ○ an article in the Anglican | 2 |
| ○ regular communication about decisions made at Synod Council | 1 |
| ○ An information video | 2 |
| ○ A page on the Diocesan website | 1 |
| 5. Fair and equitable? | |
| • Yes | 8 |
| • No | 1 |
| • N/A | 4 |
| 6. Suggestions to improve | |
| • Parish clergy could reach out to parishioners when we are seeking new members | 1 |
| • Too soon to say - time will point out flaws if there are any | 1 |
| • Could members of Council be on sub-committees? | 1 |
| • Meet each other informally to better understand context | 1 |
| • Breakout groups of the members might come up with further suggestions | 1 |
| • Continue with Bishop's appointments - provides adequate expertise | 1 |
| • Prepare a procedure manual on governance and how it links to the overall strategic plan of the diocese; review this annually or when there are significant changes | 1 |
| • Ensure that groups/parishes coming before committees are prepared for a potentially lengthy process involving requests for further information and documentation | 1 |
| • Provide documentation for Synod reps to share with their parishes/advisory boards | 1 |

Other comments

- It was not necessary to be a previous member of Diocesan Council to be on Synod Council (positive comment) 2
- Sizes of committees are good - could not be larger, would impact efficiency and timeliness 2
- Certain constituents (youth) may not be representative of membership; but identifying prospective candidates is difficult 1
- New structure facilitates big picture thinking, keeps out of the weeds; struggle to keep some longtime members out of the weeds though 3
- Diversity and broad range of voices 4
- Some danger of people pulling in 'their people' - but Bishop Andrew is good at managing that situation 1
- Mostly old and white people 1
- Lots of pre-reading necessary but that saves time; new members in the future need to be informed of this 1
- What is the impact on high level staff? Is attending meetings a good use of their time? 1
- New agendas allow more appropriate time for discussion of important issues – what is still needed though is a way to understand areas where action is not happening but is needful. We want to challenge areas that are neglected. Both roles are critical to thriving churches and a thriving Diocese 2
- Difficulties arise because church governance is a different kind of animal; complexity; Council needs to serve the churches, not just the bureaucracy 1
- Much less 'rubber stamping' 1
- Thriving churches have more influence. Is this good? How can we support and build value into the local church? 1
- Establishing dates for parishes submitting proposal up front works well – gives applicants a time frame to work around 1
- Parishes need to understand that email correspondence will go to the churchwarden email account; this needs to be checked regularly 1
- Diocesan staff are a good source of assistance 1